

# ROMAN RESEARCH PAPER

## WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT

The thesis statement answers the question "What is the point of this paper?" and tells the reader why they should care about what you are saying. It also clarifies the scope of your topic and what specifically you will address in trying to prove your point. As a result, your thesis statement should be the last sentence of your introduction.

*What does a thesis statement do?*

- It **proposes a judgment** that will be supported in the paper.
- It is **refined**, or changed, as new information is added or the outline is reorganized.
- It **provides focus** by tying supporting information together because everything in your paper should support the thesis statement.

Let's repeat that last part, *everything in your paper should support the thesis statement*. Once you have your thesis statement, the evidence, detail, facts, and examples should do more than just connect to your topic. They should **prove that your thesis statement is correct**.

*How do I write a thesis statement?*

A good thesis statement is one sentence that clearly makes the author's point. Anyone who reads this sentence should know what the paper is about. **Here's the catch:** You may not use any personal pronouns or refer to the paper in your paper. Do not write "My paper is going to be about the most epic chariot races in history!" Duh, we're about to read it.

A thesis statement declares what the paper will prove and what topics will be used to do that. It usually moves from general to more specific. This is why you chose a theme, then a more specific topic. Now that you have done about half your research, you have enough information to know what subtopics you plan to discuss. What are you trying to say by combining this information?

Theme (general subject): \_\_\_\_\_

Specific topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Possible thesis: \_\_\_\_\_

(Put a capital A over the first subtopic in your outline, a B over the second subtopic, and C over the third if you have included them in your thesis.)



## Good Thesis Statements

The examples below show how a writer moves from general subject to narrowed topic to precise thesis statement.

### Example A

**General subject:** Genocide in Darfur

**Specific topic:** Humanitarian help for refugees

**Thesis statement:** The policies of the Sudanese government toward humanitarian groups hinder attempts by aid workers to help fleeing refugees of ethnic violence in Darfur.

### Example B

**General subject:** History of the Jewish people

**Specific topic:** The attempt to establish a Jewish homeland

**Thesis statement:** American Zionists played an important role in the struggle to establish a Jewish homeland.

### Example C

**General subject:** Marriage equality

**Specific topic:** Arguments opposing the legalization of same-sex marriage

**Thesis statement:** Within the Judeo-Christian tradition, there are strong religious beliefs against extending the definition of marriage to include same-sex couples.

### Example D

**General subject:** Video game design

**Specific topic:** Use of math in the creation of video games

**Thesis statement:** Understanding mathematical principles is important for video game creators, who use tangents and parametric equations to control movement and create realistic playing scenarios.

## A good thesis statement



**is a declarative sentence** stating clearly and concisely the author's main point.

### Example

The perceived injustices of the Treaty of Versailles made it a major cause of World War II.



**is a sentence embodying a judgment, evaluation, or criticism**, and is apparent in its use of value terms, e.g., *good, better, best, valuable, worthwhile, desirable, favorable, major, most important, effective, significant, insightful*, or *should*.

### Example

The major obstacles that made the Treaty of Versailles difficult to enforce concerned disarmament, reparations, and the punishment of war criminals.



**is a statement that can be considered significant** because it contributes to scholarly understanding of a subject. A thesis statement should indicate to the reader that the author has something worth saying.

### Example

Instead of the thesis, "Playing video games is fun," develop a more significant idea about video games, like "Video games are an important developmental tool for young people because they enhance eye-hand coordination, develop complex problem-solving skills, and promote self-confidence."



**may** suggest a comparison or a contrast.

### Example

The treaty that followed World War II was radically different from the one that concluded World War I.



**may** focus primarily on the causes or effects of a particular event, condition, or change.

### Example

A number of economic and political developments in Europe made World War I almost inevitable.



**may** propose a solution to a problem or recommend a policy.

### Example

Community service should be mandatory for all high school students, and should take place during the school hours.



## Step 4

### A good thesis statement



**is not** a statement of fact.

#### Example

##### Statement of fact

The Treaty of Versailles was signed by the four major powers and became effective January 1920.

##### Thesis statement

The competing national interests of the four major powers who negotiated the Treaty of Versailles led to some deeply problematic provisions.



**is not** merely the expression of a personal opinion.

#### Example

##### Purely a personal opinion

I think the Treaty of Versailles was a foolish mistake.

##### Thesis statement

The severe punishments, loss of territory, and steep reparation payments required by the Treaty of Versailles created turmoil in Germany, which later spread to the rest of Europe.



**is not** a generalization.

#### Example

##### Generalization

The Treaty of Versailles caused the world a lot of problems.

##### Thesis statement

German resentment toward the war-guilt clause in the Treaty of Versailles directly contributed to the rise of Adolph Hitler.



**is not** written in the form of a question.

#### Example

##### Question

Was the Treaty of Versailles a major force in precipitating World War II?

##### Thesis statement

The Treaty of Versailles was a major force in precipitating World War II.